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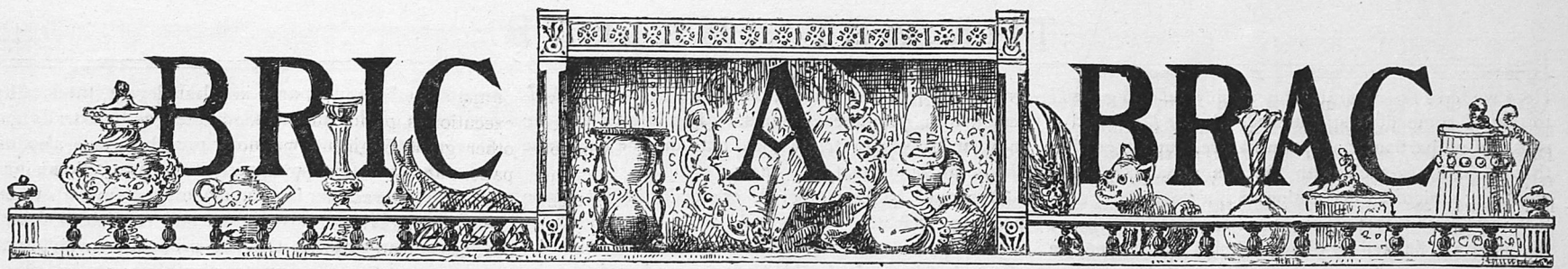
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OPAQUE AND TRANSLUCENT ENAMELS.

IV.

OUR illustrations of painted enamels this month include another example of the master, Leonard Limousin. It represents Saint Matthew, is dated 1547, and is one of a series of the twelve apostles, belonging to the Church of the Holy Father at Chartres. It was originally in the Château d'Anet, the home of Diane de Poitiers, the emblem (the salamander) of whose royal protector, Francis I., as well as his initial, will be recognized on the border. The painting is on white priming, the principal divisions of the design being traced with the brush in brown bistre. All that is



seen of the white of the ground is what is necessary for the lights of the picture.

The portrait of Jean Fouquet in enamel has been attributed to Fouquet himself, but its author will probably never be known. The French or Flemish character of the plaque would decidedly tend to favor the first opinion. It is certain, however, that there was nothing painted in Limoges before the sixteenth century that resembles it. When similar works afterwards were produced in Limoges, the naïve style of this portrait no longer obtained.

The elaborately decorated ewer and tray in the Beurdeley collection, illustrated herewith, are signed I. C., and are doubtless the work of Jean De Court, who sometimes also signed his pieces I. D. C. His signature, however, is hardly necessary for the identification of his productions; for his style is easily recognizable by the smoked appearance of his gray half tints and by the bright salmon shades of his carnations. The pieces attributed to De Court include ewers, cups, salt stands, and candlesticks, all very highly finished. These subjects generally represent the months and are imitations, more or less free, of the works of Etienne de Laulne. The reverse side of the objects, as in most Limoges enamelled ware, is generally much decorated and more interesting in subject than the inside. In the large oval tray in the Beurdeley collection, the figures, in the desperate battle waging, are of rather large proportions. The ewer shows a procession of satyrs in the triumphal march of Silenus.

The work of Pierre Raymond, who, like De Court, was a follower of De Laulne in style of composition, illustrates an essentially French school in enamel painting. The reverse of his dishes and tazze are adorned with tasteful arabesques. In his grisailles, he tints the carnations, as had been done by some of his precursors, and in the last of his works he carries this to excess, the tone assuming a salmon-like hue. A peculiar feature of his ewers is that the handles, certain mouldings, and the edge of the feet show a white ground with interlacings and scrolls in ochreous red. Pierre Courteys was another great enameller. It may be mentioned, by the way, that Jacquemart does not seem to think highly of De Court, classing him with those "enamellers of the period of decline who make excessive use of 'paillon' (solder)."

The art began to decline about 1650; and after the reign of Louis the Fourteenth fell into complete decay. A coarse coloring and an uncertain outline characterize the last period of Limoges enamels. A new method of applying enamel, however, rose with the decline of the old; and a discovery attributed to Jean Toutin, a French goldsmith, was the beginning of a process which was soon carried by his pupils, and especially by Petitôt, to most wonderful perfection.

Toutin was not exactly the inventor of this new method, for Limousin, as we have seen, attempted to paint with enamel colors on a white ground; but the colored enamels employed were not adapted for the purpose. In the execution of the new enamel paintings, Toutin was assisted by Isaac Gribelin, a celebrated crayon painter. But these were far surpassed by the famous artists Petitôt and Bordier.



ST. MATTHEW.

LIMOUSIN ENAMEL. IN THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY FATHER AT CHARTRES.

By the new method opaque vitrifiable colors were laid (the plate being gold) upon a thin ground of enamel, and passed through the fire with scarcely any change in their tints. These opaque colors were applied upon the enamel ground, in the same way as water colors are laid upon ivory. Many of the miniature portraits executed in this manner for about a hun-



JEAN FOUQUET, PAINTER TO LOUIS XI.

ENAMEL PORTRAIT OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY IN THE LOUVRE.

dred years after 1620 by a number of known artists, both French and German, are extremely good; but the name of Petitôt stands above them all. No one has ever equalled the delicacy of his drawing or the spirit and the skill of his coloring. Some of the portraits which he painted are scarcely larger than a dime; yet the merit of the design and the precision with

which it is traced, the clearness with which the features are defined, and the perfection of execution, leave scarcely an opening for criticism. Petitôt almost always enamelled upon gold; a metal which suffers least in the often repeated exposure to the heat of the furnace. The mode of enamelling adopted by Petitôt was applied by other artists to many small objects of personal luxury and ornament. Snuff-boxes, watch-cases, rings and little work-cases were beautifully decorated with scenes of battles, or rural dances and the like; or with flowers and fruit and animals; all designed and finished in a charming manner. Pictures in enamel of any importance as works of art have been very rarely produced until within the last hundred years or so; for, although Petitôt, in the reign of Louis XIV., drew with exquisite neatness, he seldom produced enamels which aimed at more than microscopic finish, and accurate drawing of the human head. His works generally measure from about an inch and a half to two inches in diameter, and are usually either circular or oval. It was reserved for modern times to try a bolder flight, and the result has been that enamel paintings are now produced with every possible excellence in art. The rich depth of Rembrandt and Reynolds can be perfectly rendered, together with all their peculiarities of handling and texture; and the delicacy of the most beautiful miniature on ivory may be successfully competed with. As regards size, enamels are now painted measuring as much as 16 inches by 18, and 15 inches by 20. The kind of enamel used for pictorial purposes is called "Venetian white hard enamel;" it is composed of silica, borax and oxide of tin.

With this paper we conclude our remarks on this branch of our subject. In a future number we shall speak of cloisonné enamels, with especial reference to the revival of the art by the French, who within the past few years have brought it to a high degree of perfection, taking the lead here, just as we have seen they have done in their revival of the almost lost art of painting on metal in translucent enamels.

ADVENTURES OF A MS. BIBLE.

AN amusing instance of the exaggerated value sometimes placed on articles of rarity by their owners, and the artful manœuvres occasionally resorted to in the hope of realizing exorbitant prices for them, by appealing to the credulity of public bodies or private individuals, is afforded in the history of the magnificent illuminated Bible of the ninth century in the British Museum, from which the elaborate initial F on page 13 is taken. This manuscript, formerly attributed to the English monk Alcuine, who was in the service of Charlemagne, is now conceded to be not of earlier date than the latter's successor, Charles the Bald. It was taken out of the Abbey at Basle by the French troops in 1793, and the same year became the property of M. Bennot, Vice-President of the Tribunal of Dolémont, from whom it was purchased about 1822 by M. De Speyr-Passavant, who at once proclaimed it to be the work of the English monk Alcuine, and prepared for the use of Charlemagne. The fact of Alcuine having received Charlemagne's commands to undertake a recension of Jerome's Vulgate text of the Bible, and having caused a copy to be written for the Emperor's own use, stands undisputed, on the authority of Alcuine himself, corroborated by the testimony of other writers. The evidence, however, that M. De Speyr-Passavant produced to prove the identity of this volume with the Bible prepared for Charlemagne proved wholly fictitious. Nevertheless, with an assumed

confidence in its genuineness, he took it to Paris in December, 1828, with the intention of selling it to the French Government, at first at the price of 60,000, then at 48,000, and finally at 42,000 francs; but the price appeared so excessive that it was resolved not to buy it, and its proprietor, in May, 1830, took it back to Basle, by no means disheartened by his failure.

Application was next made to Lord Stuart de Rothesay, English ambassador in Paris; then to the late Duke of Sussex; afterward to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of York, and Viscount Althorp, in England; to the Baron Reiffenberg, in Belgium, and to the Bishop of Beauvais, in France, in each case in vain. Having totally failed in France, in January, 1836, he set out for England, and offered the Bible to the trustees of the British Museum, first at the price of £12,000, then £8000, then £6500, which he declared was an immense sacrifice. At length, finding he could not part with the manuscript on terms so absurd, he resolved to sell it by public auction, and accordingly in April, 1836, the Bible was knocked down for the sum of £1500, but to the proprietor himself, as there was not one real offer for it. Overtures were then again made to the British Museum, which finally bought it for the comparatively moderate sum of £750.

MINIATURE PORTRAITS.

IN historical interest miniature portraits may often challenge comparison with large oil portraits. They are equally valuable as records of costume; and the portable size of miniatures frequently alone secures their preservation, so that often they are all we have to enable us to recall the lineaments of the illustrious dead. Not only also is the work historically valuable, but we all know that a diminished resemblance of an object affords a special pleasure and illusion. Who has not looked, for instance, through an inverted telescope with almost childish delight? When, too, a miniature is painted on ivory, the warm, delicate, semi-transparent surface renders it susceptible of a certain polished beauty unattainable by other means. The minuteness of such works does not preclude the possibility of their possessing qualities of high art. In proof of which, we might adduce the small picture of "The Three Graces," by Raphael himself, or his sublime "Vision of Ezekiel" in the Pitti Palace, Florence, as well as remind our readers of small pictures by Correggio and other of the greatest masters, not to mention most of the Dutch painters. If, indeed, smallness of size were any objection to a work of art, we should not esteem so highly as we do some of the most exquisite remains of antiquity—Greek glyptics—nor modern cameos, intaglios, and medallions.

Miniatures have, moreover, tender and romantic associations seldom attached to larger pictures. Many a miniature has been kissed by dying lips. These humble performances entwine themselves with human emotions, hopes, and regrets, perhaps more intimately than any other of the productions of genius. The mother treasures the resemblance of her lost son, and sheds tears over it in secret. They nestle in fair bosoms—sometimes lying unconsciously near breaking hearts. And many a manly breast has had no other consolation in danger or trial, on the battlefield or in exile. What strange and secret passages in the lives of the highborn and eminent, the worthy or infamous, would be disclosed could each little portrait tell its own tale! What extraordinary inedited materials for biography would be furnished, or "mémoires pour servir" be supplied! The mere discovery of some of them having been worn would have involved loss of life or proscription, as, for example, the numerous lockets of the Scotch Pretender.

This charming branch of the fine arts has always been successfully practised by the English, who indeed excelled in it long before they obtained distinction in any other. They had Nicolas Hilliard, Isaac and Peter Oliver, when they were indebted to the foreign-

of any country can compare with old Isaac Oliver. His execution is principally distinguished from that of the other great English miniature painter, Cooper, by its patient and minute stippling; while that of Cooper has more the character of hatching, the "drag" of the brush being evident. The latter is, therefore, more suggestive and descriptive. It must be remembered, however, that Cooper lived in an age of greater facility, and had the advantage of studying and copying the works of Vandyck (Cooper was called "Vandyck in little"); yet the boldness and freedom of his style is scarcely more admirable than the delicate fidelity and truth to nature which distinguish the best pictures of Isaac Oliver, and which give them, together with their rarity, so great a value among collectors. His son, Peter Oliver, approaches very near his father in mere finish. The works of these artists may be studied to advantage in the fine collections of the Dukes of Portland and Buccleugh.

From the time of Hoskins and Cooper—near which time also flourished Zincke, the enamel painter, Flatman, Gibson "the dwarf," and other inferior artists—miniature painting continued to be cultivated, though not with so much success, down to the time of Richard Cosway, R.A. A remarkably fine collection of the works of this charming master has been formed by Mr. Edward Joseph, of London, who, we see, has recently lent it to the Leeds Exhibition for the benefit of the local school of art. He has been asked to allow Londoners, also, the privilege of seeing at the South Kensington Museum these gems of miniature painting.

Quite a new style—indeed almost a new school—has come into vogue in England during the present century. But the English artists maintain their superiority in this branch of portrait painting, as indeed was admitted at the Exposition des Beaux Arts, even by French critics. It is to be regretted that since the introduction of colored photographic portraits the demand for this branch of art in its only tasteful and valuable form has become almost extinct.

The oldest miniatures have generally a brilliant ultramarine background, and gold is used in representing itself, as in other contemporary paintings, and also in modern Indian and Persian miniatures. Miniatures have, however, generally had a style of their own, not usually resembling closely that of other works of the same period. In respect to the practice of Sir William

Ross, Mr. Thorburn, and other artists of our own time, whatever may be thought of its legitimacy, it must be confessed that qualities of richness, force, and depth are attained which were formerly looked for only in the oil pictures of Titian, Vandyck, and other such masters. Greater structural knowledge is also now displayed, which is probably due to the fact that most of the best miniature painters of this century have paid more attention to drawing in large than the earlier artists. For, as Haydon says, "When a man who draws in large comes to paint in little, he compresses his knowledge; but a man who draws in little, when he paints in large, but enlarges his ignorance."

The French have had several excellent miniature and enamel painters since Petitôt

(whom Louis XIV. welcomed from England and loaded with honors), more particularly during the time of the Empire—of whom may be mentioned Isabey, Augustin, Guérin, and Saint. America has not yet produced any miniature painter of special repute.



EWER OF PAINTED ENAMEL.

IN THE BEURDELEY COLLECTION.

ers, Holbein and Vandyck, for larger portraits. And although Petitôt and his brother-in-law, companion, and fellow-enameller, Bordier, were patronized by Charles I., they were quickly obliged to leave on the fall of their master, and their loss was more than com-



EWER-TRAY OF PAINTED ENAMEL.

IN THE BEURDELEY COLLECTION.

pensated by the native miniature painters, Samuel Cooper and Hoskins; when, too, Englishmen were again obliged to employ for larger works the foreigners Lely and Kneller. Even up to the present time, with the exception of Samuel Cooper, few miniature painters